

# Making and Maintaining a Metropolitan Police Force

**I**N COLONIAL times and the days following the revolutionary war policemen were so vastly different in every respect from twentieth century guardians of the peace that it is difficult to realize the progress made in the methods of protecting life and property. Governor Peter Stuyvesant of New Netherlands, which is now a part of Greater New York, was at the head of the first regularly organized police force in America. From the Dutch governor's force of six old men, attired in nondescript clothing, to the modern metropolitan police organization, is indeed a far cry.

Sturdy old Peter of the wooden leg prepared in 1656 for a crusade against the liquor saloons by organizing a police force of six men. They were on duty at night and marched about the streets sounding the rattles with which they were equipped and yelling hourly: "By the grace of God, 2 o'clock, in peace." Besides keeping a sharp eye on the rum sellers, it appears that "the rattle watch" also got busy occasionally in other ways. The police records of that time show that "two boys were arrested for shouting after Indians in Pearl street," an incident which indicates that the little Dutchmen were quite as mischievous as young America. The policemen were also required to round up the hogs with which the city was infested, as the rosters committed great damage to the fortifications.

It was not until 1693 that the first uniformed policeman appeared in the streets of New York. He was armed with a bell and a formidable looking ax. His uniform



OMAHA POLICE FORCE READY FOR INSPECTION.

These old "leatherheads" were subject to very little discipline and were anything but imposing or athletic. Should one attempt to make an arrest he was either very roughly handled or led a long and fruitless chase, in the course of which he was sure to meet with many ludicrous mishaps. He was, in fact, unable to protect himself, let alone guarding citizens and property. The young bloods of those days took liberties with them which no modern youth, if he valued his head and health, would dare take with one of the "finest." It was a common occurrence to play rough practical jokes upon the poor, old inoffensive "leatherheads." Their

for every appointment, must start with the necessary set of papers, one of which is an application, another a personal statement and the third a physical examination blank. The first document is an application of five citizens to the board for the appointment. These citizens declare under oath that the applicant "is a man of good moral character, orderly in his deportment and not in any respect a violator of law or good order; that he is a man of sober, temperate and industrious habits and not addicted to the habitual use of intoxicating drinks or other hurtful excess;" that they have never seen him "drunk, or known or heard of his having been drunk, nor of his having been guilty of or arrested for any criminal or disorderly conduct or act;" that he "is a man of truth and integrity, of sound mind, of good understanding and of temper, habits and manners fit for a policeman."

#### Extensive Personal Examination.

The applicant must set forth his pedigree fully in a personal statement. He must

severe. The applicant must be between the ages of 25 and 40 years and weigh at least 160 pounds. In recent years the rule has been adopted that no one under six feet may be accepted and the average height is six feet two inches. Many, if not all, of the physical incompetents have been weeded out since Mayor Moores has been chairman of the board, and the force stands second to none in this as in other respects.

When the application papers are filed with the secretary of the board an investigation is made and, if satisfactory, the applicant is appointed by the board as a patrolman. He is required to furnish a \$1,000 surety bond for the faithful performance of his duty. Formerly personal bonds were accepted, but abuses became frequent, as some bondsmen, especially politicians and saloon keepers, insisted that the patrolmen were under obligations to them.

#### Learns Much on the Beat.

The new patrolman reports to the chief

The pay of a patrolman is \$20 per month for twelve hours work daily. A complete uniform and outfit, which the officer must buy, costs nearly \$150. The city furnishes the star and the brass buttons. Each patrolman, when sick or disabled, is entitled to participation in the fund of the Metropolitan Police Relief association, composed exclusively of the members of the department. At the present time this fund is in fine condition and stands as a protector to the policeman's family in time of greatest need.

After years of service the patrolman may be appointed to the detective force, if he has shown ability at that kind of work. Then he will receive more pay, have more liberty and no uniform to buy. The way is open, too, for advancement to the rank of sergeant, with added pay and responsibility, and from there to a captaincy. Even the chiefship is within reach of a patrolman made of the right sort of stuff, for less than ten years ago Chief Donahue was



ONE OF THE PATROL WAGONS AND CREW

was "a coat of ye citty livery, with a badge of ye citty armes, shoes and stockings." The coat of all this paraphernalia was charged "to ye account of ye citty." Like his Dutch predecessors, he was required to announce the hour and also the state of the weather. He rang his bell and chanted lustily something like this: "Past 4 o'clock, and a dark and cloudy morning." The highest wages paid to policemen in New York up to the close of the Revolutionary war was \$5.25 per week. The same general conditions prevailed in the few other cities which had policemen.

#### May Have Earned the Name.

During the first half of the last century the police were known as "leatherheads," a nickname which arose from the fact that they wore leather hats, something like an old-time volunteer fireman's helmet, with a broad brim behind. Twice a year these hats received a thick coat of varnish, and after a time they became almost as hard and as heavy as iron.

watch boxes were lassoed with a stout rope and dragged through the streets by a crowd of exuberant youths, while the watchman inside yelled loudly for help. The only insignia of office which these old fellows had, besides the leather helmet, was a big cloak and a club, and at night they also carried a lantern.

#### System Works Wonders.

The years which have passed have wrought many changes in police methods, as in everything else. It is only since the civil war that the metropolitan police system has been perfected. This system is used in all cities of the country which have up-to-date police departments. The making of a policeman under this system is a more or less complex matter, depending entirely upon the characteristics of the man who desires to become an officer. He has many requirements to meet and he must be possessed of fine physique, common sense and a good character.

The man who wants to be an Omaha policeman, and there are dozens of applicants

answer nearly forty direct and searching questions in his own handwriting and make oath that the answers are true. There are questions relating to previous military and police experience. If he has ever been discharged from either service or refused appointment, he must tell why. He must also answer this, "Have you ever paid, or promised to pay or give, any money or other consideration, to any person, directly or indirectly, for any aid or influence toward procuring your appointment?" He must also tell why he wishes to be one a policeman. Questions concerning political or religious beliefs are not asked.

The physical examination is made by the city commissioner of health and is quite

of police and is assigned to duty. Usually he is put to work with an old officer that he may learn the many and varied duties required of a policeman. Experience, however, is the best teacher and it is a fact that after a new policeman is once assaulted by a gang of toughs he knows how to take care of himself ever after. He learns, too, that honesty is the best policy, and that the policeman who thinks he can take a quiet sleep or a little nip because he doesn't see the sergeant watching him is bound to be up before the board sooner or later and receive a dishonorable discharge. No officer can long remain on the police force unless he attends to his duties faithfully and carefully.

walking a beat in Omaha. Captains Her and Hayes and all of the sergeants also came up from the ranks.

The lot of the modern policeman is not one of unalloyed bliss. He finds "his capacity for innocent enjoyment is quite as great as any other man's," but he has less opportunity to exercise it. His incoming and outgoing are regulated by the most stringent of codes. Not only is he required to report to the central police operator every thirty minutes during the twelve hours he is on duty, but he is required to be within call during the twelve hours he is off. Frequently the exigencies of the service compel him to put in as many as eighteen or twenty hours work.



LISTENING TO MAYOR MOORES' CONGRATULATIONS



INSPECTING ARMS AND EQUIPMENT.



INSPECTING THE DETECTIVES.